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In order to carry out the provisions of the Constitution, the following Bylaws are adopted for the government of the Convention:

▶ **1. Convention Session**

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▼ **8. Messenger Credentials, Registration Committee, and Credentials Committee:**

A. Messenger Credentials: Each person elected by a church cooperating with the Southern Baptist Convention as a messenger to the Southern Baptist Convention shall be registered as a messenger to the Convention upon presentation of proper credentials. Credentials shall be presented by each messenger, in person, at the Convention registration desk and shall be in the following form:

1. A completed, properly authorized, official Southern Baptist Convention registration document, certifying the messenger's election in accordance with Article III. Composition, of the Constitution of the Southern Baptist Convention; but if the messenger does not have the messenger registration document,

2. A letter from the messenger's church, signed by the pastor, clerk or moderator of the church, certifying the messenger's election in accordance with Article III. Composition, of the Constitution of the Southern Baptist Convention; or
 3. Some other document (which may include a fax, email, or other physical or electronically transmitted document) from the messenger's church which is deemed reliable by the Registration Committee or qualifies under guidelines approved by the registration secretary and the Registration Committee.
- B. Registration Committee: The president of the Convention, in consultation with the vice presidents, shall appoint, at least thirty (30) days before the annual session, a Registration Committee to serve at the forthcoming sessions of the Convention. The registration secretary shall convene the Registration Committee at least one day prior to the annual meeting to supervise the registration of messengers, to oversee the operations of the registration desk, and to rule upon any questions which may arise in registration concerning the credentials of messengers.
- C. Credentials Committee: The Credentials Committee, a standing committee, shall be composed of the registration secretary, the chair of the Executive Committee, three members nominated by the Executive Committee, and four members nominated by the Committee on Nominations. Committee members may serve simultaneously on another board, institution, commission, or committee of the Convention or as a member of the Executive Committee. The names of the Executive Committee chair and the members nominated by the Executive Committee shall appear in the Committee on Nominations' report to the annual meeting, along with the names of members being nominated by the Committee on Nominations, for election by the Convention. Members other than the registration secretary and the Executive Committee chair shall serve a term of three (3) years. The committee shall elect its own chair. Members of the Credentials Committee shall be divided into three groups of three persons each with the registration secretary and the Executive Committee chair assigned to different groups. The term of office of one of the three groups shall expire each year. A member's term of office shall begin and expire at the conclusion of the Convention's annual meeting. Members having

served one full term of three (3) years shall not be eligible for re-election until as much as one (1) year has elapsed after the last term of service has concluded. Vacancies occurring on the committee between annual meetings shall be filled by the Executive Committee, provided that any vacancy shall be filled only until the next annual meeting.

1. The Credentials Committee shall meet on the call of its chair or of any two of its members after reasonable notice of the time and place for the meeting. Meetings and reports of the committee may be private or public in order to maintain the degree of confidentiality which is appropriate under the circumstances to serve the best interests of the Convention and individual churches. When practical, meetings shall be held in conjunction with meetings of the Executive Committee or electronically. The committee may meet by teleconference, videoconference, or any other lawful means. Appropriate staff and legal assistance shall be provided for the Credentials Committee by the Executive Committee.
2. When, during an annual meeting, an issue arises whether a church is in cooperation with the Convention, the Credentials Committee shall consider the matter and review any information available to it. The committee shall either: (a) consider the question in the manner described in section (3)a below and, when prepared, recommend any action to the Executive Committee, in which case messengers from the church shall be seated pending any action by the Executive Committee; or (b) at the earliest opportunity, recommend to the Convention whether the church should be considered a cooperating church. The Convention shall immediately consider the committee's recommendation. One representative of the church under consideration and one representative of the Credentials Committee shall be permitted to speak to the question, subject to the normal rules of debate. When debate is concluded, the Convention may decide whether the church is a cooperating church or refer the matter to the Executive Committee for further review and a decision. Unless the Convention decides that the church is not a cooperating church, messengers from the church shall be registered and seated in accordance with the Convention's rules.

3. When an issue arises between annual meetings whether a church is in cooperation with the Convention, the Credentials Committee shall consider the matter and review any information available to it.
 - a. If the committee forms the opinion that a church is not in friendly cooperation with the Convention as described in Article III. Composition, of the Constitution, the committee shall submit to the Executive Committee a report stating that opinion and the committee's reasons for its opinion. The Executive Committee shall, at its next meeting, consider the report of the Credentials Committee and determine whether the church is in cooperation with the Convention. The Executive Committee's decision shall be final unless the church appeals the decision to the Convention during the next annual meeting.
 - b. A church which has been found not to be in cooperation may appeal the decision to the Convention by submitting a written appeal to the chair of the Credentials Committee at least 30 days prior to the Convention's annual meeting. The Credentials Committee chair shall immediately notify the Credentials Committee, the chair of the Committee on Order of Business, and the President that an appeal to the Convention has been lodged.
 - c. The registration secretary shall notify the Convention of the appeal in the initial registration report to the Convention.
 - d. The Convention shall consider the appeal during a time established for miscellaneous business on the afternoon of the first day of the Convention. The question before the messengers will be "Shall the decision of the Credentials Committee and the Executive Committee that [name of the church in question] is not in cooperation with the Southern Baptist Convention be sustained?" One representative of the church under consideration and one representative of the Credentials Committee or Executive Committee shall be permitted to speak to the question, subject to the normal rules of debate. When debate is concluded, the Convention shall vote whether to sustain the Executive Committee's ruling. If the ruling of the Executive Committee is

reversed, messengers from the church shall immediately be registered and seated in accordance with the Convention's rules.

4. If a church which has been found not to be in cooperation with the Convention addresses the issues which led to that finding, it may apply to the Credentials Committee for a reconsideration of its status. If the circumstances warrant, the Credentials Committee may recommend to the Executive Committee that the church be once again considered a cooperating church.
5. The committee may make inquiries of a church, but shall never attempt to exercise any authority over a church through an investigation or other process that would violate Article IV of the Constitution.

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